HISTORY OF PRUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE MONARCHY.

ABOUT the year of our Lord 997, Adelbert, Bishop of Prague, with two companions, set out on a missionary tour to the shores of the Baltic. The savage inhabitants killed him. Still Christianity gradually gained ground. As the ages rolled on, idolatry disappeared, and nominal Christianity took its place. The people were poor, ignorant, widely dispersed, and but partially civilized. During weary centuries, as generations came and went, nothing in that region occurred of interest to the world at large.

When, in the sixteenth century, Protestantism was rejected by Southern Europe, it was accepted by the inhabitants of this wild region. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, there was found upon the southern shores of the Baltic a small territory, about as large as the State of Massachusetts, called the Marquisate of Brandenburg. The marquis belonged to a

very renowned family, known as the House of Hohenzollern. At the distance of some miles east of this marquisate, there was a small duchy called Prussia. The Marquis of Brandenburg, who had come into possession of the duchy, being a very ambitious man, by skilful diplomacy succeeded in having the united provinces of Prussia and Brandenburg recognized by the Emperor of Germany as the kingdom of Prussia. The sovereigns of Southern Europe looked quite contemptuously upon this new-born and petty realm, and were not at all disposed to receive the *parvenu* king into their society as an equal.

Berlin was the capital of the Marquisate of Brandenburg: Königsberg was the capital of the Duchy of Prussia. Though the marquis, Frederick, was crowned at Königsberg, he chose Berlin as the capital of his new kingdom. He took the title of Frederick I. The king had a son, Frederick William, then ten years of age. As heir to the throne, he was called the Crown Prince. When eighteen years of age, he married Sophie Dorothee, his cousin, a daughter of George, Elector of Hanover, who subsequently became George I. of England. On the 24th of January, 1712, a son was born to the Crown Prince, who received the name of Frederick, and subsequently became renowned in history as Frederick the Great. The babe, whose advent was hailed throughout the kingdom with so much joy as heir to the crown, had at that time a sister, Wilhelmina, three years older than himself. At the time of the birth of Frederick, the monarchy was but twelve years old. His grandfather, Frederick I., was still living; and his father was Crown Prince.

When Frederick was fourteen months old, his grandfather, Frederick I., died, and his father, Frederick William, ascended the throne. He was one of the strangest men of whom history makes mention. It is difficult to account for his conduct upon any other supposition than that he was partially insane. His father had been fond of the pageantry of courts. Frederick William despised such pageantry thoroughly. Immediately upon assuming the crown, to the utter consternation of the court he dismissed nearly every honorary official of the palace, from the highest dignitary to the humblest page. His household was reduced to the lowest footing of economy. Eight servants were retained, at six shillings a week. His father had thirty pages. All were dismissed but three. There were one thousand saddle-horses in the royal stables. Frederick retained thirty Three-fourths of the names were struck from the pension-list.

The energy of the new sovereign inspired the whole kingdom. Everybody was compelled to be industrious. Even the apple-women were forced, by a royal decree, to knit at their stalls. The king farmed out the crown-lands, drained bogs, planted colonies, established manufactures, and encouraged every branch of industry by all the energies of absolute power.

Frederick William, a thick-set, burly man, ever carried with him, as he walked the streets of Berlin, a stout ratan-cane. Upon the slightest provocation, he would soundly thrash any one whom he encountered. He especially hated the refinement and polish of the French nation. If he met a lady in rich attire, she was sure to be rudely assailed: he would often even give her a kick, and tell her to go home and take care of her brats. No young man fashionably dressed could cross

the king's path without receiving a sound caning if the royal arm could reach him. If he met any one who seemed to be lounging in the streets, he would hit him a blow over the head, exclaiming, "Home, you rascal, and go to work!"

Frederick was scrupulously clean. He washed five times a day. He would allow in the palace no carpets or stuffed furniture. They caught the dust. He ate rapidly and voraciously of the most substantial food, despising all luxuries. His dress usually consisted of a blue military coat with red cuffs and collar, buff waistcoat and breeches, and white linen gaiters to the knee. A well-worn triangular hat covered his head.

By severe economy, small as were his realms, and limited as were his revenues, he raised an army of nearly a hundred thousand men. An imposing army seemed to be the great object of his ambition. He drilled his troops, personally, as troops were never drilled before. Possessing an iron constitution, and regardless of comfort himself, he had no mercy upon his soldiers. Thus he created the most powerful military engine, for its size, ever known upon earth.

The French minister at Berlin, Count Rothenburg, was a very accomplished man. He wore the dress, and had the manners, of the French gentlemen of that day. He and his associates in the embassy excited the ire of the king as they appeared at Berlin in the gorgeous court-dresses of the Tuileries and Versailles. The king, in his homespun garb, resolved that the example should not spread.

There was to be a grand review at Berlin. The French embassy would be present in their accustomed costume of cocked hats, flowing wigs, and laced coats.

The king caused a party of the lowest of the populace of Berlin, equal in number, to be dressed in the most grotesque caricature of the French costume. As soon as the French appeared upon the field, there was a great sound of trumpets; and these harlequins were brought forward to confront them. Military discipline reigned. There was no derisive laughter. There was perfect silence. The king sat upon his horse as immovable as a marble statue. With French politeness, the ministers of Louis submitted to the discourtesy, and ever after appeared in the homespun garb of Berlin.

Frederick was very desirous that his son, whom he called by the diminutive Fritz, should develop warlike tastes; but, to his bitter disappointment, the child seemed to be of an effeminate nature. He was gentle, affectionate, fond of music and books, and clung to his sister Wilhelmina with almost feminine love. The king deemed these qualities unmanly, and soon began to despise, and then to hate, the child. Still the energetic king resolved to leave no efforts untried to make a soldier of his boy.

When Fritz was six years old, his father organized a company of a hundred high-born lads, to be placed under his command. The number was gradually increased to a regiment, of which Fritz was colonel. When seven years of age, he was placed under the care of tutors, who were directed to press forward his education, intellectual and military, with the most merciless vigor. In the orders given to the distinguished military men to whom the education of the child was intrusted, the king said, —

"You have in the highest measure to make it your care to infuse into my son a true love for the soldier-

business, and to impress on him, that as there is nothing in the world which can bring a prince renown and honor like the sword, so he would be a despised creature before all men if he did not love it and seek his sole glory therein."

The poor little fellow was exposed to almost incredible hardships. His father took him on his journeys to review his garrisons. Their carriage was what was called a sausage-car. It consisted merely of a stuffed pole, about ten feet long, upon which one sat astride, as if riding a rail. This pole rested upon wheels before and behind, without springs. Thus they rattled over the mountains and through the mud. The delicate, sensitive child was robbed of his sleep as his cast-iron father pressed him along on these wild adventures, regardless of fatigue or storms. "Too much sleep," said the king, "stupefies a fellow."

Every fibre in the soul of Fritz recoiled from this rude discipline. He hated hunting boars, and riding on the sausage-car, and being drenched with rain, and spattered with mud.

Instinctive tastes are developed very early in childhood. When Frederick William was a boy, some one presented him with a very beautiful French dressing-gown embroidered with gold. He thrust the robe into the fire, declaring that he would never wear such finery.

Fritz, on the contrary, could not endure homespun. He loved clothes of fine texture, and tastefully ornamented. Most of the early years of the prince were spent at Wusterhausen. This was a plain, rectangular palace, surrounded by a ditch, in a very unattractive region. Though there were some picturesque drives, yet, to Frederick's eye, the gloomy forests and pathless

morasses had no charms. The palaces of Berlin and Potsdam, which the pleasure-loving monarch, Frederick I., had embellished, still retained much splendor; but the king furnished the apartments which he occupied in stoical simplicity.

The health of Fritz was frail. He was very fond of study, particularly of the Latin language. His illiterate father, who could scarcely write legibly, and whose spelling was ludicrous, took a special dislike to Latin. One day he caught his son with a Latin book in his hand, under the guidance of a teacher. The king was infuriated. The preceptor escaped a caning only by flight. Still more vehemently was he enraged in detecting his son playing the flute, and with some verses which he had written by his side. With inexpressible scorn he exclaimed, "My son is a flute-player and a poet!"

There was no point at which the father and the son met in harmony. Every month, they became more estranged from each other. The mother of Fritz, Sophie Dorothee, and his sister Wilhelmina, loved him tenderly. This exasperated the king. He extended his hatred for the boy to his mother and sister.

At length, another son was born, — Augustus William, — ten years younger than Frederick. The father now evidently wished that Frederick would die, that Augustus William might become heir to the throne. He hoped that he would develop a different character from that of Fritz. Still the king persevered in his endeavors to inspire Fritz with his own rugged nature and tastes.

George of Hanover having become George I. of England, his daughter, the mother of Fritz, became very desirous of marrying her two children, Wilhelmina and

Fritz, to Frederick and Amelia, the two children of her brother George, who was then Prince of Wales. But Frederick William, and George, Prince of Wales, had met as boys, and quarrelled; and they hated each other thoroughly. The other powers of Europe were opposed to this double marriage, as thus the kingdoms of Prussia and England would virtually be united.

The young English Frederick bore the title of the Duke of Gloucester. It was at length agreed by the English court that Frederick should marry Wilhelmina; but there were still obstacles in the way of the marriage of Fritz with Amelia. The Duke of Gloucester sent an envoy with some presents to Wilhelmina. In the following graphic terms, the Prussian princess describes the interview: —

"There came, in those days, one of the Duke of Gloucester's gentlemen to Berlin. The queen had a *soirée*. He was presented to her as well as to me. He made a very obliging compliment on his master's part. I blushed, and answered only by a courtesy. The queen, who had her eye on me, was very angry that I had answered the duke's compliments in mere silence, and rated me sharply for it, and ordered me, under pain of her indignation, to repair that fault to-morrow. I retired, all in tears, to my room, exasperated against the queen and against the duke. I vowed I would never marry him."

Wilhelmina was a very remarkable girl, endowed with a very affectionate, intellectual, and noble nature. Frederick of England was eighteen years of age, a very dissolute fellow, and exceedingly unattractive in personal appearance. Wilhelmina says that her grandfather, George I., after he became King of England, was intolerably puffed up with pride. He was disposed to look quite contemptuously upon her father, who was king of so feeble a realm as that of Prussia. Though George had given a verbal assent to the marriage of his grandson with Wilhelmina, he declined, upon various frivolous excuses, signing a marriage-treaty. Wilhelmina was quite indifferent to the matter. She declared that she cared nothing for her cousin Fred, whom she had never seen; and that she had no wish to marry him.

When Fritz had attained his fourteenth year, his father appointed him captain of one of the companies in the Potsdam Grenadier Guard. This was a giant regiment created by the caprice of Frederick William, and which had obtained world-wide renown. Such a regiment never existed before, and never will again. It was composed of giants, the shortest of whom were nearly seven feet high: the tallest were almost nine feet in height. Frederick William had ransacked Europe in search of gigantic men. No expense of money, intrigues, or fraud, were spared to obtain such men wherever found. The Guard consisted of three battalions, — eight hundred in each.

Frederick William swayed a sceptre of absolute power never surpassed in Turkey. It was a personal government. The property, the liberty, and the lives of his subjects were entirely at his disposal. He was anxious to perpetuate a race of giants. If he found in his domains any young woman of remarkable stature, he would compel her to marry one of his military Goliaths. It does not, however, appear that he thus succeeded in accomplishing his purpose.

One only thought seemed to engross the mind of Sophie Dorothee, — the double marriage. Her maternal

ambition would be gratified in seeing Wilhelmina Queen of England, and her beloved son Fritz married to an English princess. Frederick William, with his wonderfully determined character, his military predilections, and his army of extraordinary compactness and discipline, began to be regarded by the other powers as a very formidable sovereign, and one whose alliance was greatly to be desired. Notwithstanding he had an army of sixty thousand men, — which army he was rapidly increasing, and subjecting to discipline hitherto unheard of in Europe, — he practised such rigid economy, that he was rapidly filling his treasury with silver and gold. In the cellar of his palace a large number of casks were stowed away, filled with coin. A vast amount of silver was also wrought into massive plate, and even into furniture and the balustrades of his stairs. These, in case of emergency, could be melted and coined.

This strange king organized a peculiar institution, which was called "The Tobacco Parliament." It consisted of a meeting of about a dozen of his confidential friends, who were assembled almost daily in some room in the palace to drink beer, smoke their pipes, and talk over matters. Distinguished strangers were sometimes admitted. Fritz was occasionally present, though always reluctantly on his part. His sensitive physical system recoiled from the beer and the smoke. Though he was under the necessity of putting the pipe in his mouth, he placed no tobacco in the bowl. His father despised the fragile boy, whom he deemed so effeminate.

The double marriage was still the topic of conversation in all the courts of Europe. In the year 1726, the Emperor of Germany, who was invested with extraordinary power over all the German princes, issued a de-

cree, declaring that he could not consent to the double nuptial alliance with England. This decision did not trouble Frederick William; for he so thoroughly hated his English relatives, that he was not desirous of any very intimate alliance with them. He was willing that Wilhelmina should marry the Duke of Gloucester, because she would thus become eventually Queen of England.

On the other side, the King of England earnestly desired that his grand-daughter Amelia should marry Fritz; for she would thus become Queen of Prussia. He therefore declared that he would not allow the Duke of Gloucester to marry Wilhelmina unless Amelia also married Fritz.

But Frederick William was opposed to the marriage of Fritz and Amelia for three reasons: First, He was, by nature, an intensely obstinate man; and the fact that the King of England was in favor of any project was sufficient to make him opposed to it. Secondly, He hated Fritz, and did not wish him to enjoy the good fortune of marrying a rich and beautiful English princess. And, thirdly, He knew that Amelia, as the bride of Fritz, would bring to Berlin wealth of her own, and the refinements of the British court, and that thus Fritz might be able to organize a party against his father.

Frederick William therefore said, "Frederick of England may marry Wilhelmina; but Fritz shall not marry Amelia." George I. replied, "Both marriages, or none." Thus matters were brought to a dead lock.

While these intrigues were agitating both courts, Fritz was residing, most of the time, at Potsdam, — a favorite royal residence, about seventeen miles west from Berlin. In the year 1729 he was seventeen years of age,

a very handsome boy, attracting much attention by his vivacity and his engaging manners. He was occasionally dragged by his father into the Tobacco Parliament, where, sickened by the fumes of tobacco and beer, he sat in mock gravity, puffing from his empty white clay pipe.

In June, 1729, a courier brought the intelligence to Berlin that George I. had suddenly died of apoplexy. He was sixty-seven years of age when Death's fatal shaft struck him, while on a journey in his carriage. As he sank before the blow, he exclaimed, "All is over with me!" and his spirit passed away to the judgment.

Much as the half-insane King of Prussia hated George I., his sudden death deeply affected him. He became very religious in all pharisaic forms of self-denial, and in spreading almost sepulchral gloom over the palace by the interdict of all enjoyment. Wilhelmina writes of her father at this time, —

"He condemned all pleasures. 'Damnable all of them,' he said. You were to speak of nothing but the word of God only. All other conversation was forbidden. It was always he who carried on the improving talk at table, where he did the office of reader, as if it had been a refectory of monks. The king treated us to a sermon every afternoon. His *valet-de-chambre* gave out a psalm, which we all sang. You had to listen to this sermon with as much devout attention as if it had been an apostle's. My brother and I had all the mind in the world to laugh. We tried hard to keep from laughing; but often we burst out. Thereupon reprimand, with all the anathemas of the Church hurled on us, which we had to take with a contrite, penitent air, — a thing not easy to bring your face to at the moment."

Fritz, about this time, was taken by his father on a visit to Augustus, King of Poland, at Dresden. The court was exceedingly dissolute, filled with every temptation which could endanger an ardent young man. Fritz, who had hitherto encountered only the severity and gloom of his father's palace, was bewildered by scenes of voluptuousness and sin which could have hardly been surpassed at Belshazzar's feast.

He was very handsome, full of vivacity, and remarkably qualified to shine in society; and, being direct heir to the throne of Prussia, he was the object of incessant attentions and caressings. Child as he was, he fell before these great temptations. It was a fall from which he never recovered. His moral nature received a wound which poisoned all his days.

Upon his return to Potsdam, after a month of reckless abandonment to sin, he was seized with a severe fit of sickness. It was many years before his constitution recovered its vigor. His dissipated habits clung to him. He chose for his companions those who were in sympathy with his newly-acquired tastes and character. His vigorous father, keeping an eagle-eye upon his son, often assailed him with the most insane ebullitions of rage.

Still, Sophie Dorothee, notwithstanding all obstacles, clung with a mother's pertinacity to the idea of the double marriage. Her brother, George II., was now King of England; and Frederick was Prince of Wales, direct heir to the crown. He was then twenty-one years of age, living an idle and dissolute life in Hanover. Wilhelmina was nineteen years old.

Fritz, though he had never seen Amelia, had received her miniature. She was pretty; would bring with her a large dowry; and the alliance, in point of rank, would

be as distinguished as Europe could furnish. He was, therefore, quite desirous of securing Amelia for his bride. By the advice of his mother, he wrote to Queen Caroline, the mother of Amelia, expressing his ardent affection for her daughter, and his unalterable resolve never to lead any one but her to the altar.

Frederick William knew nothing of these intrigues; but his dislike for his son had now become so intense, that often he would not speak to him, or recognize him in the slightest degree. He treated him at the table with studied contempt. Sometimes he would give him nothing whatever to eat: he even boxed his ears, and smote him with his cane. Fritz was induced to write a very suppliant letter to his father, endeavoring to win back at least his civil treatment. The answer which Frederick William returned, incoherent, confused, and wretchedly spelled, was as follows. Contemptuously he spoke of his son in the third person, writing *he* and *his* instead of *you* and *yours*.

"His obstinate, perverse disposition, which does not ove his father; for when one does every thing, and really loves one's father, one does what the father requires, not while he is there to see it, but when his back is turned too. For the rest, he knows very well that I can endure no effeminate fellow who has no human inclination in him; who puts himself to shame; cannot ride or shoot; and withal is dirty in his person; frizzles his hair like a fool, and does not cut it off. And all this I have a thousand times reprimanded, but all in vain, and no improvement in nothing. For the rest haughty, proud as a churl; speaks to nobody but some few; and is not popular and affable; and cuts grimaces with his face as if he were a fool; and does my will in nothing but following his own whims; no use to him in any thing else. This is the answer.

"Frederick William."

The king was a hard drinker; very intemperate. In January, 1729, he was seized with a severe attack of the gout. His boorish, savage nature was terribly developed by the pangs of the disease. He vented his spleen upon all who came within hearing of his tongue, or reach of his crutch; and yet this most incomprehensible of men, while assailing his wife with the most vituperative terms which the vocabulary of abuse could afford, would never allow a profane expression or an indelicate allusion in his presence! His sickness lasted five weeks. Wilhelmina writes, "The pains of purgatory could not equal those which we endured."

The unhappy royal family at this time consisted of the following children: Wilhelmina, Fritz, Frederica, Charlotte, Sophie Dorothee, Ulrique, August Wilhelm, Amelia, and Henry, who was a babe in arms.

Frederica, who is described as beautiful as an angel, and a spoiled child of fifteen, became engaged to the Marquis of Anspach. She was the only one of the family who ventured to speak to her father with any freedom. One day, at the table, just before her approaching nuptials, the king, who was then suffering from the gout, asked her how she intended to regulate her housekeeping. She replied, —

"I shall have a good table, delicately served, — better than yours; and, if I have children, I will not maltreat them as you do, nor force them to eat what they have an aversion to."

"This," writes Wilhelmina, "put the king quite in a fury; but all his anger fell on my brother and me. He first threw a plate at my brother's head, who ducked out of the way. He then let fly another at me, which I avoided in like manner. He then rose into a passion against the queen, reproaching her with the bad training which she gave her children.

"We rose from the table. As we had to pass near him in going out, he aimed a great blow at me with his crutch, which, if I had not jerked away from it, would have ended me. He chased me for a while in his wheel-chair; but the people drawing it gave me time to escape to the queen's chamber."

While the king's peculiarly irascible nature was thus stimulated by the pangs of the gout, he was incessantly venting his rage upon his wife and children.

"We were obliged," writes Wilhelmina, "to appear at nine o'clock in the morning in his room. We dined there, and did not dare to leave it, even for a moment. Every day was passed by the king in invectives against my brother and myself. He no longer called me any thing but the *English blackguard:* my brother was named the *rascal Fritz.* He obliged us to eat and drink the things for which we had an aversion. Every day was marked by some sinister event. It was impossible to raise one's eyes without seeing some unhappy people tormented in one way or another. The king's restlessness did not allow him to remain in bed: he had placed himself in a chair on rollers, and was thus dragged all over the place. His two arms rested upon crutches, which supported them. We always followed this triumphal car, like unhappy captives who are about to undergo their sentence."

CHAPTER II.

FRITZ, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS REIGN.

As we have mentioned, Fritz was very fond of music. A teacher from Dresden, by the name of Quantz, was secretly instructing him on the flute. His mother, in sympathy with her child, aided him in this gratification. They both knew full well, that, should the king detect him with a flute in his hand, the instrument would instantly be broken over the poor boy's head. Fritz resided with his regiment at Potsdam. He never knew when his father would make his appearance.

Whenever Fritz was with his music-teacher, an intimate friend, Lieut. Katte, was placed on the lookout. His mother also, at Berlin, kept a vigilant watch, ready to despatch a courier to her son whenever she suspected that the king was about to visit Potsdam.

One day, the prince, luxuriating in a rich French dressing-gown, was in the height of his clandestine enjoyment with his flute, when he was terrified by Katte's bursting into the room with the announcement that his wily and ever-suspicious father was already at the door. Katte and Quantz seized flute and music-books, and rushed into a wood-closet. Fritz threw off his dressing-gown, and, hurrying on his military coat, sat down at the